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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0377

INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE 0263

RUEAHND/COMJTF-B SOTO CANO HO IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RULGPSU/COMSOC SOUTH IMMEDIATE

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000723

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH NATIONAL PARTY
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PEPE LOBO

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b & d).

11. (C) Summary: The Ambassador hosted an August 8 meeting with National Party presidential nominee Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo and other National Party leaders. Lobo expressed his support for the San Jose Accord, noting private polling that showed that more than 50 percent of the public now wants Zelaya to return. He said that only 14 percent of the population now supports Liberal Party candidate Elvin Santos, and 11 percent supports a "third option," the radical pro-Zelaya candidate Carlos H. Reyes. His analysis indicates a disturbing political polarization in Honduras. The Honduran electorate has always been split between Liberals and Nationals. The growth of support for a third party candidate, if sustained, may suggest a major change in voting patterns away from the two traditional parties. End Summary.

12. (C) The Ambassador stated the U.S. position that the San Jose Accord is the best manner to restore the democratic order; Lobo agreed. The Ambassador emphasized the "no contact" policy with the regime, the suspension of military aid, and the "pause" in economic assistance. He noted that, absent a political accord, relations would continue to be very difficult for Honduras with the international community. He pointed to the stance of Brazil, Argentina, and Spain, which have announced they will not recognize elections held by the de facto regime.

13. (C) The Ambassador briefed Lobo on the commission of OAS foreign ministers that plan to visit Honduras this week. He stated that it would be important to focus on the enforcement mechanisms of the accord. Lobo agreed, noting that most people still are afraid of Zelaya's intentions. He expressed his belief that a serious enforcement mechanism, such as a United Nations Chapter Six resolution, would show that the international community is committed.

14. (C) Lobo said that he had seen recent polling that over 50 percent of the population now wanted President Zelaya to return. He cited that this was an increase from a previous Gallup poll that showed that 46 percent wanted Zelaya to return, and 41 percent were against it. He noted that 62 percent of Liberals wanted Zelaya to return, and even 20 percent of National Party supporters. Ricardo Alvarez, Mayor of Tegucigalpa, interjected that many of the Nationalists

wanted Zelaya to return so that he would "go to jail."

15. (C) Lobo noted that polls showed support for Elvin Santos has fallen from 47 percent in April to 14 percent now. He noted that his own public support had not risen, but what was worrisome was that people were supporting a third candidate: Carlos H. Reyes, a leftist independent presidential candidate and pro-Zelaya protest organizer, with 11 percent support.

16. (C) While Lobo understood that this was a national problem for Honduras, he stressed that the crisis was chiefly a Liberal Party conflict. He said that Liberals Elvin Santos, Mel Zelaya, and Roberto Micheletti should all have a dialogue among themselves and find a path out of the crisis.

17. (C) Ricardo Alvarez said that the de facto regime was acting like it was "business as usual." He added they are addressing the budget, paying off debt, and paying salaries. Alvarez predicted that this week he expected pro-Zelaya protestors to attempt to commit acts of vandalism to give the OAS foreign ministers a sense that the country is in chaos.

18. (C) Comment: Lobo and the National Party continue to benefit politically from the fractures within the Liberal Party that are at the core of the crisis. Lobo expressed his support for the San Jose Accord, but he also may have been giving us a message he thinks the United States wants to hear. Though not as charismatic as Elvin Santos, Lobo and his competent inner circle have a very good understanding of polling, focus groups, and political trends. His analysis indicates a disturbing political polarization in Honduras.

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The Honduran electorate has always been split between Liberals and Nationals. The growth of support for a third party candidate, if sustained, could indicate a historic change. End Comment.
LLORENS